

Remarks

Entry of this amendment is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

The Examiner has rejected claims 9-11 as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 3,714,797 to Fischer.

This rejection is traversed.

It is respectfully submitted that the reference to Fischer discloses two shafts such as shaft 18 which are intermediate shafts which are configured to be coupled to alternative shafts. For example, each of the external shafts 18 can have a splined bore for receiving a splined portion of an associated drive shaft as disclosed in column 6 lines 15 and 16. It is respectfully submitted that the use of an intermediate shaft such as the shaft 18 disclosed in Fischer countervails the benefit of the present invention which is configured to center the longitudinal shaft on a small diameter to reduce the unbalance of the longitudinal shaft and to increase the comfort by reducing vibrations and noises.

It is respectfully submitted that the only way to reduce these vibrations and noises is to directly plug in a gearbox output shaft or a differential input shaft into an inner hub of a respective joint.

It is respectfully submitted that Fischer which discloses indirect coupling and the particular use of a flange does not allow for the reduction of an unbalance in the longitudinal shaft and the reduction in vibrations and noises. Thus, Fischer teaches a prior art that is cited on page 2 of the present application which discloses having a gear box output shaft and a differential shaft each having a flange which may be coupled to a counter-flange (reference numeral 46 of the Fischer citation) which leads to high centripetal forces in the longitudinal shaft caused by the slight balance errors resulting from insufficient centering.

Because Fischer relates to a device which does not disclose the direct coupling of a drive shaft to an inner hub as claimed in claim 9, it is respectfully submitted that claim 9 is patentable over the above identified patent.

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The Examiner has rejected claim 8 as being obvious under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being obvious in view of Fischer and Schreiber.

This rejection is traversed.

Claim 8 also includes the feature that a journal of a gearbox output shaft having a plug-in tooth system is directly connected to the first inner hub and a journal of a differential input shaft having a plug-in tooth system is directly connected to the second inner hub.

As described above, this feature is not shown or disclosed in Fischer. The Examiner attempts to overcome this shortcoming by combining the reference of Fischer with Schreiber.

It is respectfully submitted that the present invention as claimed in claim 8 would not be obvious in view of the combination of Fischer and Schreiber. This is because Schreiber does not disclose teaching connecting a gearbox output shaft to one of the inner hubs. In column 2 lines 41 to 46 Schreiber explicitly states that the reference numeral 6 denominates an output shaft which is connected to the driven wheels of a vehicle. Thus, shaft 6 is neither coupled to a differential or to a gear box.

With respect to input shaft 7, Schreiber discloses that input shaft 7 should be coupled to the differential gear of a drive unit.

However, claim 8 states that the gearbox output shaft and the differential input shaft have to be plugged into the inner hubs of the joints.

In contrast to claim 8, Schreiber discloses a plug in journal of a side shaft into a differential gear. Thus, the coupling as proposed by Schreiber provides for a central bore in a differential gear into which is introduced a journal coming from the shaft .

Claim 8 instead claims that the journal of the gearbox output shaft or differential input shaft is introduced into a central bore of the inner hub of a joint.

It is respectfully submitted that due to the length of the connecting portion of the input shaft 7, it would not be possible to mount shaft 7 in a manner such that is claimed in claim 8 of

the present invention. For example the length of the input shaft is such that its journal would not pass over coupling 5 and the retaining region 3 for mounting the shaft on a fixed journal of a differential output shaft. Thus, it is respectfully submitted that the shaft disclosed in Schreiber is not the same as that claimed in claim 8.

It is respectfully submitted that since claim 8 is believed to be allowable, claims 2-7 are allowable as well.

In conclusion, none of the claims have been further amended or canceled. It is respectfully submitted that based upon the above arguments, the remaining claims are patentable over the above identified references taken either singularly or in combination. Therefore, early allowance of the remaining claims is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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